

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 12, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As the Omicron variant continues to propel COVID-19 cases to unprecedented levels, it is more important than ever that we invest in the production and distribution of innovative technologies that will help our country effectively manage this pandemic. Throughout this crisis, our academic medical centers and universities have gone above and beyond in their research capabilities, creating new tests and vaccines at a historic rate, while also actively caring for patients with COVID-19. Investing in their research is what will ultimately help our nation overcome COVID-19, and I write today to highlight the important work that is being done in Central New York to finally put our nation on the road to a lasting recovery.

At the State University of New York (SUNY) Upstate Medical University, the same researchers who developed the best saliva COVID-19 diagnostic test have now developed the best COVID-19 antibody test that uses saliva instead of a blood draw. This test is incredibly sensitive and can detect even trace amounts of COVID-19 antibodies, enabling the creation of a curve estimating a patient's COVID-19 antibody levels over time following vaccination or infection. In the long-term, this technology could better inform protocols and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) regarding vaccination timing, isolation instructions, and other critical public health measures.

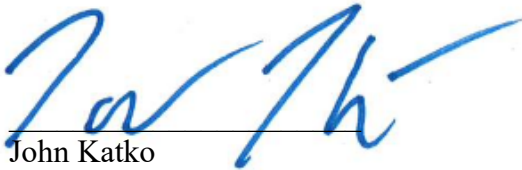
Although important steps have been taken in your Administration and under the Trump Administration to combat COVID-19, it is time to return to the table on bipartisan policies that will ultimately help our nation overcome this virus. This includes devoting additional resources to academic medical centers like SUNY Upstate and prioritizing the deployment of innovative technologies that will enable a stable economic recovery. For example, earlier this year, I joined Representative Nydia Velázquez in introducing the COVID-19 and Pandemic Response Centers of Excellence Act. This key piece of legislation would authorize \$500 million for a new program allowing the Department of Health and Human Services to award grants to at least 10 academic medical centers that have demonstrated a high level of expertise in COVID-19 research. With this funding, the bill would support additional research on COVID-19 variants, patient care, mental health resources, healthcare disparities, vaccines and pandemic preparedness.

During the early months of the pandemic, Congress worked with the Trump Administration to pass several bipartisan bills that provided trillions of dollars for the immediate public health response to COVID-19, as well as necessary relief for struggling sectors of our economy and millions of American families and businesses. Unfortunately, recent months have been marked

by unilateral action in response to this crisis, and not the comprehensive and bipartisan approach that made initial relief efforts so successful. With this in mind, I respectfully request that your Administration reengage congressional leadership on both sides of the aisle and determine a bipartisan pathway to put this pandemic behind us and prepare for future public health emergencies. This strategy should include substantive legislation like the COVID-19 and Pandemic Response Centers of Excellence Act, emphasizing the role of innovative technologies in putting our nation on a sustainable road to recovery.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this matter. Along with many of my colleagues, I stand ready to work with your Administration on policies that will help all Americans move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Katko", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Katko  
Member of Congress